

Gov. Bradford Home in England Saved from Destruction by Englishwoman

Timely Purchase Prevents Tearing Down of Notable American Shrine

By J. Harry Hooper
HULL, England

How the spontaneous act of a young Englishwoman has preserved for posterity one of the notable American shrines in England, was the story unfolded to me when I made a pilgrimage a few days ago to the homes of the Mayflower Pilgrims at Austerfield and Scrooby. The young woman was Miss E. B. Pennington, an inhabitant of Bawtry, the town situated between the two tiny hamlets, which lie only three miles apart. The shrine, saved from destruction almost at the last moment, was no less than the home of William Bradford, early governor of the Plymouth Plantation.

Having settled for a summer's preaching in Hull, that busy port of Yorkshire which lies on the border of the district where lived the Pilgrim Fathers, one of my first concerns was this visit of devotion, a journey of about fifty miles. The unfamiliar sun

was shining brightly on the few dozen closely-clustered brick cottages as we made the rounds of church, vicarage and manor house at Scrooby, and turned our Woolesey car of English make back in the direction of Austerfield.

EXTENSIVE REPAIRS UNDERWAY

Drawing up in front of the Bradford homestead, on the left side of the road as is the English custom, we entered the enclosed field which leads to the side door, paying no attention to the "no trespass" signs we saw posted. About the house several workmen were busy. One was bringing out pieces of stone, while another carried in carpenters' tools and bits of heavy lumber. The interior was bare of furniture. Apparently, extensive repairs were being made.

Through one of the windows we saw a young woman in a broad brimmed hat at work. She came out to the stone wall which encloses a small garden at the side of the house, and we asked if we might take some photographs. Explaining that during repairs the house was not on public view and during this pe-

riod photographs by experts were not permitted, she asked if I were a professional photographer. At this, I introduced myself, and added that as a photographer, unfortunately, I was neither professional nor expert.

The introduction proving satisfactory, we were given a private showing of such parts of the interior as were not at present unsafe for inspection. Further conversation brought the invitation for Mrs. Hooper and me to take tea, and we enjoyed this pleasant English custom from the stone wall, immaculately clean, whose original function, by means of small openings placed at regular intervals, was to serve as a feeding trough for the pigs.

While we consumed tea and biscuits, and later took several photographs, the story of the salvage of this ancient relic developed in all of its unrealized drama. Having served its purpose for many generations, this venerable dwelling had begun to feel the effects of age and was about to give up its spirit, its work being done. Decay creeping steadily upon it, the last tenant moved out and the house became permanently vacant.

Miss Pennington, who lives with her parents in Highfield House, at Bawtry, little more than a mile away, had watched the diminishing fortunes of the old manor house. Being owner of much of the property around it, she had often considered buying it, but had been dissuaded because of the apparent cost of placing it in proper condition.

WATCHED DIMINISHING FORTUNES

Passing the house one day, less than three months ago, she saw the foreman of a crew of building wreckers looking at the property. She knew that his men had been at work in the neighborhood, and she stopped to investigate. He told her that the work nearby was nearly finished and that on the following week he would move his men and tools to the Bradford homestead, in order that his heavy machinery might not later have to be transported there from a more distant point.

Spurred on by the emergency, she called upon the owner, and before the day was over the property was transferred into her possession. By this small margin

of one woman's interest was the old Bradford manor house at Austerfield saved from being utterly demolished. "It seemed a pity," she said to me, "that the old house had to be destroyed."

For the past two months the work of restoration has gone steadily forward. Much has been done. Much remains to be done. Small outlying buildings and unluckily additions have been taken down. Accumulated brick and stonework have been removed. Outside and in, the house is beginning to assume what was probably its original English neatness. Costs are constantly exceeding estimated expenses, heavy beams are found to be unsound and have to be supported by those equally heavy, but the new owner is going on resolutely. She is determined that the present deterioration shall be definitely halted, and so far as is at present possible the general appearance it originally held shall be restored. In time, the present stable will be remodeled for a caretakers's cottage, and the house will be free from spoliation by trespassers.

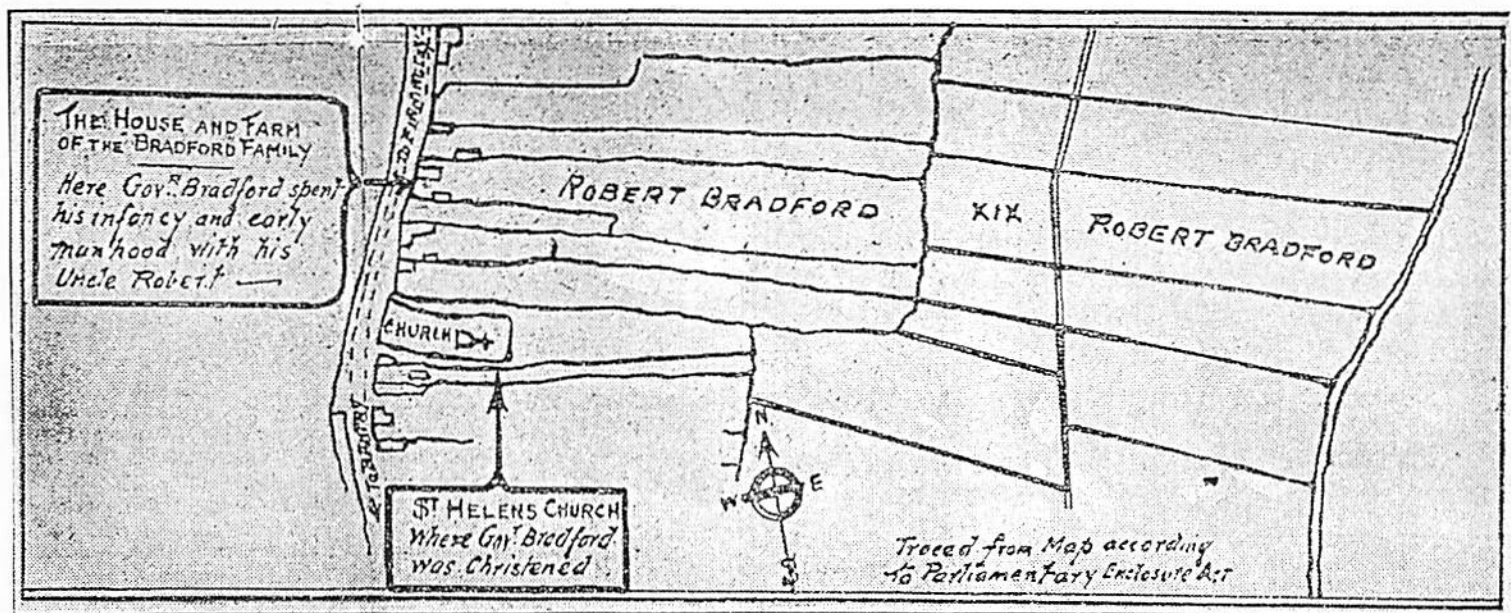
Scrooby and Austerfield are "forgotten villages." Only an occasional tourist visits these

Map Reveals Exact Location of Birthplace of Leader of Plymouth Colony

haunts. The visitors' book of the Scrooby church shows a surprising scarcity of names. Well informed Englishmen resident only fifty miles away, while they know the names, have only the vaguest idea of the location of these villages.

With this indifference, it would not be surprising if some day all evidence of these landmarks, which record the earliest beginnings of our American nation and which every lover of American history should cherish, would be irretrievably lost. The church property at Bawtry and Scrooby, of course, is safe. While the manor house of William Brewster at Scrooby, appears to be in private hands, its well-kept condition seems to insure its preservation for some years. But that all of these properties should have the watchful eye of those most concerned with their history, the recent dramatic episode taking place at Austerfield would seem to make self-evident.

THE HOUSE IN WHICH GOVERNOR BRADFORD WAS BORN AND A MAP SHOWING ITS LOCATION



The author of the accompanying article on the saving from destruction of the Governor Bradford home in England is Rev. J. Harry Hooper of Hingham who is paying a summer visit to Hull, England, where he is occupying the pulpit of the Park Street Church. Mr. Hooper is minister of the First Parish in Hingham where his congregation was founded as early as 1635 and where it worships at the "Old Ship" Church, erected in 1681, the oldest church in continuous use in America, and a fine example of the building of the colonial period. He is descended on the maternal side from a Mayflower Pilgrim; and through his father from martyrs burnt at the stake in Sussex in 1557.

A former resident of Dedham, Lady Hattie T. Fisher-Smith, recently sent to the Transcript a letter in which she wrote that "a few people having heard that the Bradford Manor House at Austerfield where Governor Bradford of the Mayflower was born was to be demolished, a few of us decided that it would be a great pity if this great landmark should be destroyed. Therefore, a trust has been formed with the American ambassador as its president. And we have asked the General Society of Mayflower Descendants to look after

the trust in America. The total amount of the purchase money is \$5500 and the acquisition will include the Robert Bradford Field and Manor House. The trust will not be a money-making concern but merely for the preservation of the homestead and land. As an old member of the Dedham Historical Society I hope to be able to do

something to help raise the necessary money. I have been appointed one of the trustees. I am enclosing an interesting map which one of our trustees has just found at the British Museum and until now no one was quite sure in which of the houses in the vicinity Governor Bradford was born, so this new discovery is very much worth while."

